

**MINUTES
REPRESENTATIVE TOWN MEETING
STATE OF THE TOWN MEETING
DECEMBER 6, 2004**

RECEIVED

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TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
DARIEN, CT

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular State of the Town Meeting of the Representative Town Meeting was called to order at 8:25 p.m. at Darien Town Hall by Karen Armour, moderator.

Upon Roll Call, the following members were present:

From District I, there were 5 members present, 6 absent.
From District II, there were 10 members present, 6 absent.
From District III, there were 8 members present, 7 absent.
From District IV, there were 8 members present, 8 absent.
From District V, there were 13 members present, 4 absent.
From District VI, there were 7 members present, 6 absent.

The absentees from District I were: Coburn, Cook, Grimes, Puzyk, Sickinger, Stewart.

The absentees from District II were: Clark, Goersch, Howe, Magida, A. Sullivan,
Weicker.

The absentees from District III were: Concannon, Coyle, DeVita, Lamendola, Maroney,
Moore, Young.

The absentees from District IV were: Cameron, Davis, Fletcher, Gebauer, Maloof,
Morrison, Rayhill, Savage.

The absentees from District V were: Doying, Hendrickson, Pegler, Ritchey.

The absentees from District VI were: Berl, Carroll, Kominek, Riccardo, Tamme,
Weismiller.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

**** THE AGENDA WAS ACCEPTED BY UNIVERSAL CONSENT.**

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 17, 2004 ANNUAL MEETING

**** THE MINUTES WERE ACCEPTED BY UNIVERSAL CONSENT.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Moderator asked the Chairs of Districts II and V to introduce their new members. Callie Sullivan, District II, introduced Stephen Johnson, Sam Schoonmaker and Maureen Sheehan.

Murry Stegelmann introduced Barry Gidseg and Chris Camuti, and noted that this brings their district to full strength.

STATE OF THE TOWN REPORTS

FIRST SELECTMAN

First Selectwoman Klein read her written report (attached).

The Moderator introduced State Representative Duff, who was in the audience.

CHAIR, BOARD OF EDUCATION

John Boulton, Vice Chairman, read his written report (attached).

REPORT OF HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE

Peter Maglathlin, Chairman of the High School Building Committee, read his report (attached).

REPORT OF TOKENEKE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE

D. Bruce Hill, Chairman of the Tokeneke School Building Committee, read his report (attached).

CHAIR, BOARD OF FINANCE

Peter Hovell, Chairman of the Board of Finance, reviewed his written report (attached).

CHAIR, PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

Patrick Damanti, Chairman of the Planning & Zoning Commission, read his written report (attached).

Following the State of the Town reports, the moderator opened the floor for questions.

Marc Thorne, District II, asked Mr. Hill if he had schematics for Tokeneke School at the library. Mr. Hill said they would be put onto the Town Web site.

**** UPON MOTION MADE AND SECONDED FROM THE FLOOR, IT WAS
UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO ADJOURN AT 9:30 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Telesco
Telesco Secretarial Services

2004 STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS

**Evonne M. Klein
First Selectwoman
Town of Darien
6 December 2004**

Good evening Madame Moderator, State Senator Andrew McDonald, Senator-elect Bob Duff, State Representative John Ryan, fellow elected officials, members of the Darien Community and members of the press.

Before I begin my formal remarks this evening I would like to thank the team who worked hard to create the slide show for this evening – Felicia Rubenstein of 341 Studios, Pat D'Arinzo, Sue Swiatek, Jim Coughlin and all who contributed photos. It is important to remind ourselves of all the wonderful people and places in town that make Darien such a special community.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of Darien's volunteers, community organizations, business owners and members of our boards and commissions for their selfless dedication to our town. It is because of the generosity of all of our volunteers – of their time and creativity that our town continues to thrive. And I want to welcome our many newcomers – residents and businesses alike to Darien.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of being First Selectwoman is meeting and speaking with Darien residents. Through emails, First Selectwoman's Night Out, phone calls and conversations at various events, I've heard and learned so much about what is on the minds of our residents, the direction they'd like to see the town move in and the needs and wishes they have for building a stronger, better community. I continue to incorporate their ideas and thoughtful comments in all that I do and recommend.

In fact, comments, suggestions and feedback from community residents were the impetus for one of my early initiatives as First Selectwoman – setting priorities for our town. Back in January, the Board of Selectmen unanimously identified five priorities:

- 1) Open and Community Space**
- 2) Traffic and Transportation**
- 3) Revitalization of the Downtown/Business Districts**
- 4) Senior Issues**
- 5) Charter Revision**

And for the first time, the Board of Selectmen built its budget around priorities to ensure that as the year unfolded, we'd have the resources needed to accomplish what we set out to do.

As a result, I am proud to stand before you this evening – before the Darien Community – to share our Darien success story. Tonight, my formal remarks will highlight only some achievements. A more comprehensive list has been distributed to members of the RTM and is available, along with a copy of my remarks, on the town website.

This has been a year of tremendous accomplishments – accomplishments that I believe have dramatically improved the quality of life in Darien. Much of our success has been derived from operating off a clearly defined set of priorities. These priorities not only reflect the aspirations and needs of the Darien Community, they are the criteria against which the Board of Selectmen are held accountable to you and the residents of Darien.

I'll begin by talking about COMMUNITY AND OPEN SPACE. Visit any of our parks and beaches and you will see and experience noticeable improvements. This year, brought:

- 1) The completion and dedication of the Challenger Field at McGuane Park;**
- 2) The installation of new playground equipment at Baker Park;**
- 3) A brand new playground to Cherry Lawn Park, a project built through a public/private partnership;**
- 4) And this winter, the construction of a new boat ramp at Pear Tree Point Beach. In April, Darien boaters will launch their boats from a new, safer ramp.**

This work represents just the beginning of what we hope to accomplish as we assume a higher standard of stewardship of our assets and raise our maintenance standards at our parks and beaches.

We've also seized an opportunity to acquire 15 acres of developable open space. After years of hope and speculation, the Board of Selectmen has negotiated an agreement with members of the Procaccini Family to acquire 15 acres known as the Procaccini Property for \$7.5 million. The Board of Selectmen is scheduled to vote on this acquisition tomorrow evening at a 7:30 meeting in room 206. The prospect of owning this large piece of developable land is exhilarating – we will finally have the ability to meet currently unfulfilled community needs or, if we chose, simply add to our open space inventory.

TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC

In the 2004/2005 Budget, we took the extraordinary step of creating a Parking Fund. Now, commuter parking fees are held and accounted for separately, they are no longer part of the General Fund, and 100% of fees collected are used to operate and maintain our two train stations. This fund was established for the following three reasons:

- 1) to ensure the town can accurately account for the parking revenue generated by commuter parking fees and how the funds are spent;
- 2) to ensure that these funds are used only to operate, maintain and improve our two train stations;
- 3) to enable Darien to retain 100% of its parking revenue here in Darien, rather than sending 20% off to the State as we've done in prior years. This is a stipulation that was negotiated into our new contract with the DOT.

With dollars now dedicated to the upkeep and maintenance of our train stations, we've been able to invest over \$60,000 in much needed and long overdue improvements to the Noroton Heights Train Station. Over the past year, the station received a new roof, new windows, new benches, new exterior walls and a new coat of paint, both inside and out. And, after calling attention to the condition of the pedestrian overpass, we've received a commitment from the DOT to replace the concrete flooring this spring.

Traffic on our roads continues to detract from our ability to move easily in and around town, particularly when accidents occur on I-95. Recognizing the need for outside expertise and an independent and fresh perspective, we've taken the unprecedented step of applying for a federal grant to fund a comprehensive plan to improve traffic flow and pedestrian access along the Post Road. We expect to hear this spring.

In the meantime, The Darien Police Department and the Police Commission continue to be supportive and committed to easing traffic. Police are now deployed to congested areas, such as the intersection of Corbin Drive and the Post Road, to keep traffic moving. We've added new pedestrian crossing signs and repainted walkways to make it safer and easier for people to walk and shop around town.

We've mounted an aggressive challenge to CL&P's plans to run an underground 115kv transmission line through our town. The company is considering two routes through Darien, neither of which is acceptable and both of which will be disruptive and unsafe for our community. With the support of the Board of Finance, the Board of Selectmen retained the services of an attorney to represent and protect our interests. We are also working to identify possible alternative routes and technologies. We

expect to present our testimony to the Siting Council in January or February.

REVITALIZATION OF DOWNTOWN/BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

While ideas abound on how to bring more businesses and shoppers to our downtown, we lack the significant organizational structure and expertise needed to bring these ideas to fruition. Enter the CT Main Street Center. The Main Street Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to balancing historic preservation with downtown revitalization. In July the Executive Director of CT Main Street Center toured our business districts, the first step in the application process for becoming a Main Street Community. In collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and my office, the newly formed Downtown Darien Committee is taking the lead on this initiative. And we are starting to see the results of their hard work and creativity. The Downtown Darien Committee's September meeting with business, property owners and Main Street's Executive Director was well attended and the enthusiasm generated gave life to the first annual Dine Darien/ Shop Darien Weekend. Look for more exciting events to come, giving us even more reasons to shop and dine right here in Darien.

SENIOR ISSUES

Our town is fortunate to have an incredibly dedicated, energetic and active group of seniors. Many of our seniors volunteer their time – at the Senior Activities Center, the Library, and DCA, are elected officials and serve on boards and commissions. Over the years, they have given so much to our community by supporting our schools, our projects and truly working to improve our community.

This year, we made a concerted effort to reach out to our seniors. In the spring, we released our first issue of "Out and About", our Senior Newsletter. This was a cooperative effort with Social Services, the Library, the YWCA, the United Way, community volunteers and my office. The newsletter will be published three times a year, with the next issue due out in January.

A Town Meeting was held at the Senior Center where we presented information about the many benefits available to our seniors, through both the town and the State. We are holding another meeting this December. In addition, the Social Services Department and the Tax Assessor's Office have played a larger role in assisting seniors to access the benefits they are entitled to receive.

While we continue to budget money for capital improvements to the Senior Center, it is time to take a closer look at the building's structure. In January, the Board of Selectmen will appoint a Senior Center Task Force to

conduct this in depth study and assessment of the Center and report back their findings and recommendations to the Board.

CHARTER REVISION

The Board of Selectmen is considering the scope of this project and the next step in this process will be to appoint a Charter Revision Commission in late January.

There are several other projects that are deserving of special mention this evening.

- 1) The Tax Relief program for Emergency Services volunteers was resoundingly passed by the RTM in April. Thank you again;
- 2) Two annual traditions returned to our town – skaters once again glided across Gorham Pond, thanks to a compromise worked out between neighbors, our police department and skaters; and the Boy Scout Tag Sale returned for a very successful event in May;
- 3) We accepted several gifts from the community – the new turf field at the high school, buoys for Darien Harbor, a new playground at Cherry Lawn Park, improvement of the card room at the Senior Center and an upgrade of the baseball diamonds at the Little League Fields;
- 4) At risk teen behavior is being addressed in a more visible way through the efforts of the Darien Coalition Addressing At Risk Behaviors;
- 5) We installed the Purple Heart Monument at Town Hall.

As we move into the new year, my hope is our community will continue to embrace the possibilities, identify opportunities and take actions that will serve us well today and in the future. Yet as we move forward, we must respect the needs and wishes of those community members who have already given and invested so much over the years in our town. As such, it is important to strike a respectful balance – a balance that enables us to manage our progress in a responsible, community responsive and respectful manner.

With that in mind, I'd like to share with you some of my plans for the coming year:

- 1) Continue to earn the community's trust and confidence by:
 - a. Maintaining open lines of communication, conducting business in a transparent manner and offering all members of

- This has been a truly remarkable year. I would like to thank my fellow members of the Board of Selectmen for their dedication, hard work and collaboration. I would also like to thank my family for their support. My hope is that when the Darien Community looks back on this Administration it will say, “They listened to the community, set and accomplished goals. Darien is a better place for all. Most importantly, we did it together – a united community.”**

2004 State of the Town – Board of Education Report

Thank you for the opportunity to report on the current state of the Darien Public School system. As a former RTM member, it is indeed a privilege to be before you tonight. I am happy to report that your Darien schools remain among the top public school systems in Connecticut, with strong student achievement, a highly qualified staff, improving facilities, all capably managed by a superb group of administrators.

The schools have had an excellent year, marked by accomplishments in academics, science, the arts, and athletics. A few highlights: 17 members of the Class of 2004 won national recognition in the National Merit Scholarship program; we are only one of two high schools in the nation working on a hydrogen fuel cell project, 5 Darien students had their work selected for the Congressional Art Exhibit, and our sports teams had an outstanding year, including state championships in Tennis, Volleyball and Swimming. It should be noted that 72% of the student body participates in at least one sport. We are very proud of our students, and those who work with them, including DHS Principal Dr. Jerry Auclair, who was named Connecticut High School Principal of the Year.

Trying to use empirical measurements to quantify school performance is always a challenge, since many of our greatest victories are not measured in high SAT scores, but in improving the long-term quality of life of all our students. Nevertheless, Darien students continue to excel as measured by the SAT scores released last year. Verbal scores increased from 576 to 577, and Math scores from 595 to 612. Darien also scored the highest math CAPT scores in Connecticut this past year.

Enrollment as of October 1, 2004 stood at 4,378 students, an increase of 104 from the year before, led by an increase in Middle School enrollment of 83 students. Kindergarten enrollment was down by roughly 10%. While this large of a decrease appears to be an anomaly, it is our expectation that Kindergarten enrollments have generally peaked and will begin a slow decline in the years ahead. However, total enrollment is not expected to peak until 2010-2011, with over 4,700 students registered at that time.

We are currently projecting 4,527 students for 2005-2006, or a 3.4% increase. The main story here is that enrollment will begin to increase significantly at the Middle School and particularly the High School next year and in the years ahead, with the resulting budget implications. We project an incoming 9th grade class of 329 students next fall, representing a 58% increase over the 208 students in the senior class that graduates this June. It is no surprise that the Board is greatly relieved with Mr. Maglathlin's reports that the new, larger High School continues to progress on schedule towards a September 6, 2005 opening.

Clearly, a major challenge facing the Board of Education is the opening of the new Darien High School next fall. I was able to join many of you this Saturday on a tour of the new school, and we all saw first hand what a magnificent facility this school will be when it is completed. Peter Maglathlin and his colleagues on the Building Committee have done a tremendous job to date. It hasn't always been easy for them -- I'm sure that sometimes

they must feel like the biggest piñata in town -- but we hope they know how sincerely grateful our community is for their extraordinary efforts.

During the tour, we were also able to see the new turf athletic field at the High School, and it is an important addition to the town's athletic facilities. On behalf of the Board, I would once again like to publicly thank Rusty Shriner, his DHS Turf Committee and all those citizens who donated generously to make this dream a reality. The Darien athletes of today and tomorrow will all be the better for it.

The Administration has been spending considerable amount of time preparing for the opening of the school, and it is our expectation that a well-planned transition will be executed as smoothly as a move of such scope can be. The schools will have one March vacation this year and next year instead of the normal February and April breaks to create as long a window as possible this summer for demolition and site work to occur. If anyone knows of any ancient rituals or voodoo magic that can prevent snow days this winter, Mr. Maglathlin will happily talk with you after the meeting.

Even though the budget implications of the new building were anticipated when the project was approved by the town, please be reminded the new school will have considerable impact on the budget put forth by the Board for next year. We are moving from an 180,000 square foot facility to a 330,000 sq ft building, and the operating costs will rise as a result of the increased size and complexity of the facility. As always, the Board will work with the Board of Finance to ensure that we do all we can ensure our budget numbers are as reasonable as possible, but you need to be aware of the realities we face.

In addition, a comprehensive technology proposal for the new school was presented last month to the Board by the Administration. Please note that while the Building Committee's technology budget covers the technology infrastructure needs of the school, the actual classroom hardware will have to be funded out of the Board of Education's operating budget. You may have seen this week's Darien Times article on this subject, and I want to assure you that the Administration's proposal is not a Taj Mahal "cutting edge" wish list. Rather, it provides the basic hardware required by a modern high school. It is a progressive, cost-effective solution that will give the DHS faculty the tools to enrich the classroom interaction between teacher and student. This plan is the product of a great deal of hard work by Superintendent Dr. Mary Jo Kramer, Assistant Superintendent Don Fiftal, DHS Principal Dr. Jerry Auclair, and their colleagues, and the Board is very excited about the prospects for improved learning coming from this initiative.

This technology plan fits well with the long-term focus of the Board and the school Administration, namely to improve the in-classroom delivery of curriculum. One of the things I've learned while being on the Board is that running a school system is a very complicated business, yet like any enterprise it all comes down to a core value proposition: in our case, teaching children effectively. Efforts such as staff development forums, revised teacher evaluation forms, challenging principals to be educational leaders in the schools, and improving technology all meet at one goal: to help our teachers raise the achievement levels of classrooms full of diverse talents and learning

personalities. We have terrific people teaching our children, and we want to give them every advantage that we responsibly can to do their jobs well.

I believe Bruce Hill will remark on the status of the Tokeneke project later in this program, so I won't comment on that here, other than to also extend our thanks to Bruce and his colleagues for their hard work in expediting the project to meet a June 30, 2005 funding deadline. Bruce, we greatly appreciate all you and your committee are doing.

In closing, 2004 proved to be a successful year for the Darien Public Schools, and we thank all of you, and the town as a whole, for the generous support that enables the schools to flourish as they have. 2005 looks to be a year full of excitement and challenges, one that will test all of our abilities as fiduciaries of the public trust. The Board of Education will do our best to find reasonable solutions to the challenges ahead, and we are confident that we can count on your support when we do.

On behalf of the Darien Board of Education, I wish you and your families a joyous holiday season, and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

John V. Boulton
Vice Chairman
Darien Board of Education
RTM State of the Town Meeting
December 6, 2004

HIGH SCHOOL UPDATE

12/6/04

- A. We've been at this for four and a half years now and we're finally entering the home stretch. It's been quite a journey! However, I'm pleased to report that we remain on schedule for a September 2005 opening. We also remain on budget—but it's very tight largely due to the higher costs of materials such as steel and oil.
- B. The new school is essentially closed in and already partially heated. The air conditioning has been installed. Every square inch of the new school is air conditioned. The exterior brickwork is done.

Getting the school closed in before winter was a key milestone for us because it eliminates weather as a negative factor going forward. We will now be working inside during the winter. All that remains to be totally closed in is to pop in a few more windows and finish off the last roof on the auditorium which will be completed this week. By the end of the month we expect to be heating the entire building.

- C. Regarding the interior of the building:

The three gymnasiums and related athletic rooms are basically done. The wood floor in the main gym is going down this month. The locker rooms are in.

The classroom buildings are being sheet rocked... tile floors, drop ceilings, lighting and lab stations are already installed in the science wing. The large windows in every class room and the open courtyard maximize the amount of natural light, which has been scientifically proven to enhance a student's performance.

The cafeteria eating area is done. The kitchen and serving areas are now being installed.

The auditorium will be receiving a significant amount of our attention over the next few months due to its complexity. This magnificent 1200 seat facility will feature state of the art sound and lighting.

The school is both wired and wireless to accommodate the latest technology.

The new furniture budget of \$1,800,000 has been recently put out to be bid. We will be opening the bids in January.

D. Regarding the site work:

The new turf field and track are in and they're incredible. They will be open for business this spring. The bleachers and blue wave press box are also in. The new field will accommodate football, soccer, field hockey and lacrosse.

The baseball field is in. However, we do have a drainage problem here. But we have a solution and expect to correct it in the near future (this will require EPC approval). The tennis courts are in and the practice football field has been graded.

We recently paved down both the east and west sides of the school—all the way to the front of the building. This was not scheduled to be done until next spring. However, by doing it now, we will eliminate a muddy work environment this coming spring.

The courtyard will be graded in December.

E. Demolition—the Last Phase:

We will demolish the existing gymnasium in March in order to get a head start on the high school access road. Students will take their spring gym classes in the new school.

The remainder of the school will be demolished over the summer. When school opens in the fall, the front of the school will not be accessible because of the installation and

construction of the new playing fields and drop off loop. Consequently, during the fall of 2005, students will be dropped off on the east side of the school.

I strongly recommend that the town explore turfing one of these new fields in front of the school. By doing it now, we will save approximately \$150,000 to \$200,000. We will get credit for the sod, irrigation and soil in the original budget. I know that both the Board of Ed and the Board of Selectmen are looking at this. However we must act quickly, given that we will be doing the site work this coming summer.

F. In Summary:

The new Darien High School is going to provide a remarkable learning environment. We've recently conducted a number of tours for the town officials. Their enthusiasm for the facility has been unanimous.

Our focus over the next few months will remain the same as it has from the start—bring the school in on time and on budget. Thank you.

**Tokeneke School Building Committee
D.B. Hill Chairman
December 6, 2004
Report to the Representative Town Meeting**

Madam Moderator, distinguished guests and members of the Representative Town Meeting:

Since April 2004, the Tokeneke School Building Committee has worked to carry out its Charge of Responsibilities as approved by the RTM on March 15, 2004 to build a replacement for the existing Tokeneke Elementary School. This charge, based upon recommendations from the Board of Education and Board of Selectmen, reflects the widespread recognition that the existing Tokeneke School needs to be replaced and that delay will mean escalating construction costs and maintenance costs.

The committee has received guidance from the Board of Education through the Educational Specifications and a Summary Report based upon a feasibility study by Fletcher Thompson Architects in November 2002. These documents contain school construction timelines proposing a June 2005 state funding application for a September 2008 completion date or, in the alternative, a June 2006 state funding application for a September 2009 completion date.

At the outset, the Committee decided unanimously to pursue the goal of a June 2005 state funding application until such time, if ever, it became apparent that such a deadline could not be met. The Committee based this decision on its belief that the June 2005 deadline was indeed achievable and that its responsibility to the Tokeneke School community and its fiduciary responsibility to the larger Darien community required it to

make every effort to avoid the deferral of the educational benefits of the new school and the inevitable increase in costs that would result from an additional one year delay.

I am pleased to report that our committee has made steady progress toward meeting the June 2005 state funding request deadline. After months of meetings with our architects, school administrators and staff, we have approved a schematic design and site plan. Later this week we expect to receive a presentation of the cost estimate based upon the schematic design. This will enable us to proceed with our funding request based upon the estimated costs of our proposed design rather than the two-year old cost estimates in the Feasibility Study.

Over the past week there has been a great deal of speculation about a potential referendum related to the school building project. Indeed, I have received telephone calls and emails asking me the date of the Tokeneke School referendum. We have not yet submitted our funding request to the Board of Education, Board of Selectmen or Board of Finance, all of which must approve the request. And as you know, we have yet to submit our request to you for your consideration. Therefore, we will decline to speculate on the date of a potential referendum or whether there will be a referendum at all. History tells us that an expenditure of this size, and particularly an expenditure for a public school, may well result in a referendum. We recognize that that this is a statutory right given to our electors and the exercise of that right is beyond our control. What we intend to do is to focus on obtaining our cost estimate, finalizing our schematic design and preparing for our presentation to the boards with a view toward a late February presentation to the RTM.

In advance of those submissions, beginning immediately after the first of the New Year, we will hold a series of public information meetings to discuss our proposal to answer questions and solicit comments and suggestions from the Tokeneke School parents, the neighbors, and our community as a whole. There are certain to be questions, suggestions and differences of opinion over the details of this type of project. However, to date, we have not heard any expression of opinion that the existing school should not be replaced or that delay would be desirable from an educational or economic viewpoint. If there are concerns about cost, design, schedule, or any other aspect of this project, we look forward to addressing those issues in the coming weeks. We are committed to an open, collaborative process and welcome input from any member of our community. It would be curious indeed if anyone would remain silent during this discussion period only to attempt to derail the process by means of a referendum after approval. And it would certainly not be in the best interests of the taxpayers or the students.

Thank you for your support. We look forward to working with you in the future to achieve the important goal of a new Tokeneke School.

RTM – State of the Town Remarks – December 6, 2004

Peter F. Hovell – Chairman – Board of Finance

Madam Moderator – Members of the RTM – Town Officials – and Fellow Citizens –

I am here tonight to report on the state of the town's finances.

In preparing for tonight, I went back and read my last two State of the Town speeches. It may not surprise you -- but very little has changed. I could probably re-deliver either talk – change a few facts – and only my biographer would know.

One of the roles of the Board of Finance is to be a watchdog – the town grinch – we try to temper and restrain spending. As you listen to my following remarks – you may conclude that the Board of Finance has failed. The upcoming budgets are not a pretty sight.

But let me start on a more positive note – I want to assure you that the financial condition of the Town is excellent.

We ended the last fiscal year on June 30th within our budget.

Our General Fund – which you might think of as retained earnings – or working capital - is adequate – for now

And our credit rating – which was reaffirmed prior to issuance of bonds last week – is still Aaa.

To review the past year –

1) We did manage our revenues and expenses - as I said a moment ago – to stay within the budget.

And, I am very proud of both our Town and our Board of Education for their management of their budgets during the past year.

2) We successfully sold a 20-year – \$ 17.4 million dollar bond issue last week at a rate of 4.02%.

3) Last January we refunded \$ 9.1 million in bonds for a \$ 386K net present value savings. Kathy Hammell of our board and Kate Clarke, Director of Finance are to be credited for proposing and carrying it off.

4) . During the past year the Board of Finance adopted a General Fund Policy. We intend to maintain the General Fund at a level of 8 to 12% of the current budget. This is a prudent policy for the financial well being of the Town. To put it in perspective – we started this year with the Fund at 9.4% of this year's budget

5) We were able to keep the mill rate increase to just under 8% for the fiscal year that we are now in. The previous year the increase was 6.8%.

6) In regard to the issues with the Assessor and Building Department records which were not properly completed. We formed a special subcommittee whose members are Barbara Cook of our board, Virgil Wenger of the RTM and Tony Homicki our new Assessor. I am confident - that through their excellent work - they have resolved the issues – and that the properties are now on the tax rolls, and bills have or, are about to be rendered. In addition, we are deep into evaluating bids from several software vendors to provide a program for control of all land use records – from Planning and Zoning - to the Building Department – to the Tax Assessor and the Tax Collector. The money for this program is not in the current budget - so I am sure that we will be back to you in the near future for funding of this needed program.

I have passed out to you tonight a new Board of Finance 5 Year Financial Forecast.

This year we decided – in an effort to simplify – and de-mystify the process – to hand out only the first 3 pages. There are 10 more pages of back-up and detail. We plan to give those pages to Finance and Budget after this meeting – and any other members who would like some exciting bed time reading. The whole document will be on the town website.

The 3 pages are – first – the Assumptions – upon which we base the whole forecast. They are followed by Exhibit B – Expenses, and Exhibit C – Revenues and the Estimated Mill Rate.

This paper is a FORECAST – not a budget. It is a planning tool.

The information and data has been provided by town officials. The Board of Finance does not create or dictate the numbers. The Board of Finance does decide - using our best judgment - to estimate factors, such as, rate of inflation, interest rates, etc. And the Board of Finance did vote to approve this forecast.

Before I get into some of the issues – let me cut to the chase. This forecast shows a whopping possible Mill Rate increase next year of 11.76%. The following years show smaller increases. But as those of you who work with budget forecasts know – the out years are almost a guess. Only the in years represent good known facts. Also, if you make a major increase in the first year – the out years are based on a very high base – hence smaller ongoing increases are still really very large dollars.

The 11.76% does include

- 1- operation and final bonding of the new high school
- 2- moving and start up money for the high school
- 3- \$ 500K for additional technology at the high school – The Board of Education has told me that they must have \$ 1 million not \$ 500K
- 4- \$ 14 million bonded over several years for the purchase and development of the Procacinni site
- 5- \$ 17 million for Tokeneke school

In order to get the mill rate increase down to 11.76% - the Board of Finance arbitrarily removed \$ 1.5 million in capital expenses for next year and moved it to an out year. We did not specify which projects are to be moved.

To put this in perspective – each 1% increase in the mill rate = \$ 763K . If you were to add back the 1.5 million which we moved - the mill rate increase would be 13.73%

that is almost a 14% increase

I also have to note that there are over \$ 1.6 million in additional expenses for next year which may be added to the proposed budgets - and are not in this forecast..

I am not going to go into too much detail here. I would like to meet with the Finance and Budget Committee after this meeting to give them the full report. And I would be glad to discuss the forecast with anyone who would like to stay.

The main drivers in the forecast for next year are ..

- 1 - Medical insurance premium increases of 20 to 25%
- 2 - Workers compensation – 10 to 15%
- 3 - Pension contributions – 8%
- 4 - Salaries – 4%
- 5 - Fuel oil – 100%
- 6 - Electricity – 16.7%

On the capital side – driving this forecast ...

- 1 - completion of the high school – start up expenses – additional pupils
- 2 - purchase and development of the Procacinni property
- 3 - Tokeneke school
- 4 - Senior center and an aquatic center

- Debt service next year will be \$ 9 million – an increase from \$ 7 million this year.

To me the message is clear. We are in a “perfect financial storm”. Expenses are going up at a tremendous rate. And, although I realize that we have electors who can easily pay for an increase of this size – we also have a large – less vocal group – for whom these increases are a real hardship.

Our job on the Board of Finance is to determine if given projects are worth the cost. Are they a good value? Secondly, we look to see if the town – as a whole – can both afford the project and is willing to be taxed to pay for it. Thirdly, we try to balance competing needs and demands on our resources. The pie is only so large.

I contend that we are at a point where the cost of some services is beyond the value received – and/or the need for that service. I doubt that there are any projects which are not worthy to be considered. But are they worth it relative to other needs and available resources?

I cannot speak for my board. But, as for myself, I cannot envision voting for a mill rate increase of this magnitude. 11.76% is a 50% above last year's increase – which in itself was a record increase. I may be wrong – but – in my heart I feel that there will have to be cut backs. We are not in Washington DC – we cannot print money. I will do my best to find ways to accomplish the needed services – but at a lower total cost than our forecast suggests.

Simple nipping and tucking of the budget will not do it. Major expenses will have to be deferred or deleted. And, I hope that town officials will recognize this as they prepare their budgets.

I thank you for your time tonight. And as I said earlier – I and the board - are available for questions and discussion after this meeting.

STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS
PATRICK J. DAMANTI, CHAIRPERSON
DARIEN PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
DECEMBER 6, 2004

Good evening Madame Moderator, Members of the RTM, Members of the Boards of Selectmen, Finance and Education, elected and appointed officials, and the people of Darien.

Initially I would like to thank the Director, Assistant Director and the entire staff in the Planning and Zoning Department as well as all the members of volunteer "Land Use Boards" which are: the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Architectural Review Board and the Environmental Protection Commission. As development activity within the community continues, these Boards all do an excellent job and give a great effort serving the community. Their dedication is appreciated.

Last year, I mentioned the ongoing progress related to the 2005 Town Plan of Conservation and Development. The Commission continues to work on that project and we anticipate a final draft will be completed within six to seven months. Draft chapters are now on the Town web site for your review and comment. The Commission generally discusses the Plan or portions of it once or twice a month, and we welcome the opportunity to hear from you with your ideas on the Plan. We encourage all of you to become involved.

The Commission approved two new subdivisions this year. Single-family residential construction and redevelopment, including “teardowns”, continues.

The focus of my address this year will be the various recent changes in the Darien business community.

The most visible changes are the two major projects in the middle of downtown, both of which recently partially opened. First, there is the Grove Street Plaza project, which is the arguably one of the most important mixed use developments in the Town’s history. It includes two retail stores, a restaurant which is scheduled to open in late winter, and ten residential apartments. The developer deserves much of the credit for the project, her vision to demolish four existing houses on Grove Street and develop those parcels of land will contribute to the enhancement to downtown. The second major project includes the renovation of the Darien Playhouse movie theater with the establishment of two retail stores on the first floor, and a spa on the second floor, which is scheduled to open in a month or two. These two projects, both undertaken by Darien developers, have significantly contributed to the construction trades within the past year.

The Commission also approved other projects downtown this year, including a new ice cream shop near the theater, outdoor dining for a restaurant which is on both Tokeneke Road and Center Street, and a make-your-own Pottery store also on Tokeneke Road. New downtown tenants have moved into existing downtown spaces such as a new eyeglass establishment, flower shop, interior design store, antique shop and a new bank.

This follows on recent approvals in the past few years for a new tea party and antiques store, and an expansion of the existing chain store pharmacy. Going back slightly further, the Commission approved Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts, and Webster Bank. In the past three years, we have also seen reinvestment on Tokeneke Road, which include a new catering business, new Chinese restaurant, a hair salon, and a pet grooming store.

Changes in Goodwives Shopping Center were also approved in 2004. Aux Delices opened, Coromandel Indian Restaurant received approval to expand, and most significantly Shaw's, the "anchor of the Center", will be demolished, expanded, and totally rebuilt. We expect that the new enlarged Shaw's will be an enhancement to Goodwives.

We have also approved changes at in the Noroton Heights shopping areas, one of which was the approval to changes to the doughnut shop, which will give them more space, and the ability to have a rear entrance, which should improve traffic flow on Heights Road. Furthermore, a paint store is also a new addition in that area. You may remember that about a year and a half ago, a new fitness center opened in the former Pitney Bowes building that was vacant for many years. I credit Commission members for approving a good re-use of that building. Substantial renovations were approved and completed to the buildings in the strip shopping center on Heights Road about two years ago, and new tenants such as a furniture store, hair salon, and new insurance agency established in the Norton Heights shopping centers.

Other commercial developments include the new veterinary office at Exit 11, and we expect that the old veterinary office across the street from it will be

demolished soon. This should improve traffic flow and reduce the number of curb cuts on Boston Post Road. We have also recently approved an expansion of the building next to the Darien Fire Department and expansion and rebuilding of a long-time Darien restaurant.

We are pleased to see so many property owners willing to substantially invest in Darien. We take that as a great compliment to the entire community. We know of other commercial projects on the drawing board, and fully expect that this substantial commercial redevelopment of Darien will continue into 2005 and beyond.

I cannot emphasize enough that all of these projects in downtown, Goodwives Shopping Center, Noroton Heights, and throughout the remainder of the community, were all approved under the current zoning regulations in effect. I give my fellow Commission members credit for continuing to do what is best for the community, without sacrificing safety or good planning, while still keeping the existing character of Darien, and upholding the current Zoning Regulations. We will continue to welcome high quality non-residential development in Darien. This is a business-friendly Commission with vision, who understands that development such as those mentioned this evening will enhance the community, and make Darien a great place to work, live, and shop.

Thank you.

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